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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

SVE/MC-19

APPROVED JNG 2/24/59

DATE: February 8, 1959
Time: 11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Place: Schaumburg Palace,
Bonn

SUBJECT: Berlin and Germany

FEB 27 1959

US
PARTICIPANTS: The Secretary
Ambassador Bruce
Mr. Merchant
Mr. Berding
Mr. Hillenbrand
Mr. Tyler
Mr. Klein

Germany
Chancellor Adenauer
For. Min. von Brentano
State Secretary Globke
State Secretary van Scherpenberg
State Secretary von Eckardt
Dep. State Secretary Dittmann
Dr. Ruete
Herr Weber

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After a restricted meeting between the Secretary, the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister, the larger meeting resumed.

Brentano said he would like to have the Secretary's impressions on procedures, particularly the arrangements for the meetings ahead. As he understood the Secretary yesterday, the Working Group of technical experts would reassemble in Paris after the current Washington meeting to study the Western proposals made thus far and attempt to give them a new form and setting. This package would then be given to the Four Western Foreign Ministers for examination. In view of the scheduled NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington April 2-4, it occurred to him that it might be appropriate for the Three and then the Four Foreign Ministers to meet in Paris in the second half of March and in replying to the Soviet note of January 10 seek as early a date as possible for the meeting with the Soviet Union, preferably mid-April. The Federal Government, he said, was of the opinion that the lapsed time between the NATO Conference and the Conference with the Soviet Union should be held to a minimum to forestall unnecessary talk and public speculation based on inevitable leaks.

As far as the question of presentation was concerned, Brentano thought that the German contribution at the conference outlined in the Chancellor's memorandum to the Secretary (i.e., the establishment of German diplomatic relations with Poland and Czechoslovakia and the declaration on the Oder-Neisse) as a matter of tactics should be introduced during the course of negotiations rather than at the initial stage of the conference.

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The Secretary said

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The Secretary said he would ask Mr. Merchant to answer the Foreign Minister's questions on procedure, but first he, the Secretary, had some comments of his own to make. He said Mr. Macmillan felt very strongly that the meeting with the Soviet Union should start as close to May 27 as possible, perhaps about May 10, so that a conference would still be in session at that time and not have collapsed before then. Envisaging a four to five week conference, such as that of November 1955, a meeting that began in April might have broken up by May 27, and thus deprive the Soviets of the pretext for postponing the threatened Berlin action.

On first reaction, the Secretary said he was inclined to agree with the Foreign Minister on the appropriate time for tabling the German proposals, particularly since the Federal Republic would not be a participant in a Four Power conference. The Secretary stressed, however, that all through the conference the United States would want to consult very intimately with the Germans on the initial program which the Western Powers would present, since our proposals might require indicating the desire of the Federal Government to establish certain types of interchanges with the GDR.

Referring to his remarks yesterday concerning the desirability for establishing freer communication and travel between the two parts of Germany, the Secretary said the West might want to suggest the establishment of common standards of human rights and fundamental freedoms in both parts of Germany. Proposals of this kind, he thought, would probably command a good deal of world support.

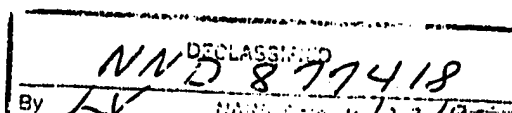
With reference to the question of procedure, Mr. Merchant said it was tentatively planned that the Working Group of technical experts would start meeting in Paris possibly before the end of this month to examine the substance of our positions and the form of presentation. He thought the Working Group now meeting in Washington could have some preliminary exchanges on these matters. Mr. Merchant said agreement now seems to have been reached in Washington on the texts of the Four Western replies to the Soviet note of January 10 and, allowing for adequate time for consultation with NATO, he thought they might be handed to the Soviets in a week or ten days.

On this basis, Mr. Merchant thought the Four Western Foreign Ministers might plan to meet in mid-March to consider the progress reports of the Working Group and give the necessary guidance and instruction for its further work. The next step, he said, might be for the Four Western Foreign Ministers to meet in Washington during the April NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting to give further policy guidance and concert their presentation to NATO.

Brentano said that although he still felt an early conference with the Soviets was desirable, this was not a fundamental problem and could be discussed further.

The Chancellor interjected

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The Chancellor interjected to say that we would perhaps have a better idea of a possible date for a meeting with the Soviets after Mr. Macmillan returned from Moscow. Then the Chancellor asked rhetorically whether anyone knew the date of the coming British elections.

The Chancellor then changed the line of discussion and referred to certain ideas mentioned to him by Ambassador Bruce concerning the desirability of having a protracted meeting with the Soviets. The Chancellor, of course, was aware that Foreign Ministers always had calendars at their elbows and therefore cannot talk indefinitely. However, he wondered whether a conference with the Soviets could not be continued by the Deputy Foreign Ministers guided by the Foreign Ministers. This would remove artificial time limits normally set for Foreign Ministers' meetings and give all parties concerned an opportunity to know each other and even establish some measure of personal confidence. Moreover, the Russians like long conferences, long speeches and long discussions; it is in their nature.

At this point Mr. Dulles intervened to say that it was his impression that Gromyko probably had little else to do and therefore in this respect was probably expendable. This, however, did not apply to the Western Foreign Ministers. More seriously, the Secretary said he thought there was merit in having a continuing body study these problems. As a matter of fact experience has indicated that there seemed to be a useful purpose in merely having talks go on. He cited our talks with the Chinese Communists in Warsaw as a case in point. He said these talks in themselves were absolutely barren but the fact that our representatives were in touch with each other probably makes it more difficult for the Chinese Communists to launch attacks at this time. The Secretary thought it was particularly interesting that the Chinese Communists launched their attacks last August when our talks with them in Geneva were suspended following Ambassador Johnson's transfer from Prague. This may have been coincidental, the Secretary said, but it does seem that talking provides some measure of insurance for peace.

Returning to the Secretary's remarks on the establishment of common standards of rights and freedoms in both parts of Germany, Brentano said he thought this an extremely good idea and that perhaps the United Nations might be given an enforcing role.

Bringing the discussions to a close, the Chancellor said he had one more point to make -- that was that the West should make it absolutely clear that it will not make a single concession without obtaining a counter-concession. Concessions made without equivalent counter-concessions only served to make the Soviets more greedy and more intransigent. The Chancellor said he would like to have this precept brought to the attention of the press and particularly to those parliamentarians who seem to insist only upon a Western demonstration of flexibility.

In concluding his remarks, the Chancellor expressed his sincere gratitude to the Secretary for making this visit, and hoped the Secretary would have time to calmly reflect on the things he heard and discussed during the course of this trip.

The Secretary

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The Secretary in turn said that although he was never happy when there were international crises, he did find one compensation -- it afforded him the opportunity to meet with the Chancellor and Herr v. Brentano. He said there was a value that came out of comradeship of working together for peace and justice. He was always extremely satisfied when he met with the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister either in Bonn or elsewhere, and rejoiced in the common spirit and motives which bound the two countries. This series of meetings this week end was still another example of this relationship at an important and perhaps crucial moment.

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